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State drops test burn of cyanide

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SPRINGFIELD—A controversial plan to test burn cyanide-coated film chips in west suburban Naperville has been abandoned, Gov. Thompson said Thursday.

Instead, he said, state legal and environmental officials are looking for an out-of-state incinerator to conduct the test and exploring alternative disposal methods for the toxic chips.

Permit authority for the burning, originally scheduled for next month, had been granted by federal and state environmental protection agencies.

But the plan was opposed by Naperville residents and officials, who feared that the experiment would produce toxic fumes.

"Our judgment was that the burn could be safely conducted in Naperville without adverse health and environmental consequences," Thompson said.

"Stating that and persuading the people of Naperville that it's so are two different things."

Earlier Thursday, Illinois Attorney General Neil F. Hartigan said the test burn would be delayed so safety questions could be answered. "The intention here is to resolve an environmental problem, not cause one," he said.

State officials have been looking since last May for a safe way to dispose of 16 million tons of cyanide-

laced chips left by a silver extraction company.

Hartigan had contracted with a Chicago company to conduct the test burn to determine whether incineration was feasible.

The decision to abandon the test burn was hailed by local officials.

"Now we won't have to go into court," said Du Page County State's Attorney J. Michael Fitzsimmons, who had planned to seek a court order barring the burn.

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